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# Ontario's Probation and Aftercare Service for Juveniles



Ontario

Ministry of  
Correctional  
Services

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## INTRODUCTION

The Probation and Aftercare Service is a branch of the Ministry of Correctional Services. Probation/aftercare officers supervise juveniles on probation and wards who have returned to the community from the training schools.

On any given day the Ministry has approximately 7,000 boys and girls in its care, and of this number approximately 6,000 are living in the community and under the supervision of probation/aftercare officers. Offices are located throughout the province as well as at each of the training schools.

## PROBATION

A probation/aftercare officer is responsible to the Court as well as to the Ministry. In Court work the officer may be asked to provide a social history report which aids the judge in the decision-making process. The report must be a factual, unbiased statement concerning the youth's family, social and educational history, and relationships with any social agencies with which the youth has previously been involved. It may also indicate any physical or mental disorders as reported by a physician or other professional source.

Probation is granted under Sections 2-1 and 20(1) (d) of The Juvenile Delinquents Act. A juvenile on probation is supervised in the community by an officer trained in giving guidance and counseling to youths. The officer prepares ongoing reports for the Court on the progress of the probationer. However, the main purpose of probation supervision is to help the young person overcome difficulties in relating to society in a law-abiding manner, and to help develop existing capabilities and discover new ones. Through the work of the officer, the young person may continue to live in the community, thereby avoiding admittance to an institution.

The probation/aftercare staff also work closely with the Court to identify those youths who should not come under the supervision of an individual officer but whose needs could better be met by appropriate

resources within the community. Diverting children away from the justice system is an expanding concept.

## AFTERCARE

A young person may be admitted to training school under The Training Schools Act or The Juvenile Delinquents Act. Where a judge decides that a period in a training school is in the best interests of the boy or girl, the officer will continue to be involved throughout the youth's period of residence in the training school and placement in the community up until the termination of wardship at age eighteen. Throughout this period of time, the Superintendent of the training school is the legal guardian of the ward.

While the young person is in the training school, the officer liaises with the school staff concerning the progress of and future plans for the ward. He also visits the family and interested persons in the community in order to evaluate the current home situation and to provide counseling and support for the family. Should it not be possible for the ward to return home, then he or she could be placed in a foster home, group home or boarding home, for example. The officer initiates the placement process and reports on the plan to the Superintendent and to the Training Schools Advisory Board for consideration and approval.

The officer supervises the wards in the community by providing counseling and assistance to them, and liaises with the community school and assists in registering the wards.

Should the ward wish to work rather than attend school, the officer helps to find employment and possibly a boarding home. The officer also gives guidance in such matters as handling money, changing jobs, opening a bank account and other situations which the youth may be facing for the first time.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Volunteers are actively involved in supervising and counseling probationers and wards in the community. They also organize and

participate in recreational and special activities. They are of invaluable service both to the young people who benefit from the one-to-one relationship and to the Ministry. The Ministry has also contracted counseling services from private agencies in the community. The agencies work with the family in an effort to preserve the family unit and to assist the young person in functioning more effectively in the community.

Some staff work exclusively with community schools in an effort to develop life skills programs which better meet the needs of predelinquent and delinquent youth. For the older youth, there are special work study projects which are designed to identify employment opportunities and to assist the youth in obtaining employment.

Realizing the importance of good foster homes, the Ministry has placed special emphasis on the development of more homes and the training of foster parents to handle the special types of problems which some of our wards present.

The Ministry has embarked upon a program whereby it obtains some services for young persons in its care directly from existing community agencies. The Ministry has contracts with several Family Service Agencies throughout the province for the purchase of services from these agencies, which in turn provide a family counseling service to youngsters and their families who have previously been involved with them. This permits a greater continuity of service.

## PLAYING A KEY ROLE

The role of the probation/aftercare officer is a key one in the correctional process. The officer's initial findings influence the life of a juvenile in trouble with the law during several very impressionable years of a young person's life. The officer's guidance and assistance, whether during a period of probation or after a stay in training school, will help the future of all those who come under his or her care. The officer must, therefore, be a well-trained individual of the highest integrity.